

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ALMATY 002370

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP, INL/HSTC PASS TO KCC
POST FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [KCRM](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [KZ](#)
SUBJECT: Q1 AND Q2 FRAUD SUMMARY - ALMATY

REF: A. STATE 205073, B. ALMATY 355, C. ALMATY 1476

1A. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Since independence in 1991, the economic situation in most of Kazakhstan has improved. In the larger cities, such as Almaty, Astana, and Atyrau, the oil and gas industry has provided an economic boom. However, the improvement in living conditions is uneven and in many rural areas there are still pockets of extreme poverty and economic hardship. The economic situation is aggravated by corruption, which motivates much of the visa fraud encountered by post. Many visa applicants have unofficial jobs as produce sellers or goods traders. It is difficult to verify income from these jobs, let alone establish strong ties to entice applicants to return.

Most visa applicants desire to travel to Brooklyn and Rego Park, NY, where there are very large Russian-speaking populations. There also appears to be a growing group of Kazakhstani religious refugees in the Seattle, WA area. Students from the region often seek to study English in Houston, TX or Omaha, NE. A significant number of ethnic Russians have sought to leave Kazakhstan since independence. The government and other organizations here are actively promoting study and use of the Kazakh language, and also focusing on indigenous culture. However, in both areas the process here has been slower than in neighboring Central Asian countries, especially Uzbekistan.

While the number of Kazakhstani immigrants to the United States is increasing, it is still fairly low.

Fraudulent documents, especially invitation letters, employment letters and other bona fides are available and easy to come by. However, it is unusual to see fraudulent, official Kazakhstani documents such as passports and birth certificates. On the other hand, it is common to see fraudulent official documents from neighboring countries. The most common occurrence of official document fraud is the switching of nationalities from neighboring countries in Central Asia. Due to historic, ethnic and cultural ties among Central Asian populations, it is easy to switch nationalities.

1B. NIV FRAUD: Embassy Almaty processes NIV visas for Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The most widespread incidence of consular fraud in Kazakhstan is related to NIV applications, featuring false job and invitation letters. Recently, post has seen more sophisticated attempts to fraudulently obtain visas, including P and O petitions and H2B petitions. The current NIV refusal rate is 18% and more than twice that for Tajiks.

For a number of months, Post received applications from groups of Tajik athletes intending to compete in the United States in various competitions. The sports ranged from Tae Kwon Do to Arm Wrestling. Nearly all of the applicants were unqualified -- their only travel outside of Tajikistan was their trip to Almaty for their visa interview.

Post has recently uncovered P petition fraud perpetrated by Tuscan Art, Inc. (reftel C). Of 15 applicants claiming to be part of two nationally-known performing groups from Tajikistan, only 6 were actual performers. The remaining were "hangers-on". An in-depth investigation by Post determined that the petition has submitted many similar petitions in CIS countries.

Additionally, Post has seen an increase in the number of H2B applicants over the past quarter. It would appear that as petitioners are unsuccessful in obtaining workers from Europe and the Caucasus, they are moving further east to Central Asia.

As the Summer Work and Travel season has started, Post has begun to see job offers from particular parties of concern. When discussing with applicants about how they obtained their job offers, the number one answer is "on the Internet." It also appears that a small group of students have paid for their job offers. Post is flagging particular applications for follow-up in the fall, based on comments received from our 2005 Summer Work and Travel season validation study (septel to follow).

Student visa fraud (F visas) still remains rare in Kazakhstan. The majority of Kazakhstani students are qualified for their visa. Those who are not usually do not provide fraudulent documents. However, post also adjudicates visas from Tajikistan, where many students remain unqualified to study in the United States because of their inability to provide proof of sufficient financial means to pay for their first year of study.

Post is seeing an increasing number of Third Country Nationals applying from the region and beyond, including Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Israel, who often have difficulty proving ties to either Kazakhstan or their home country. Many times, these applicants have previous refusals from their home countries or neighboring posts.

Post does not see significant or noticeable fraud in other visa categories, including R, A, G, or H1B.

C. IV FRAUD: Post processes immigrant visas for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Approximately 60% of post's IV cases are from Uzbekistan. Beginning in Summer 2006, Embassy Tashkent will process Uzbek IV applications.

Recently Post has seen multiple K-1 petitions filed for the same person by different petitions. In one such case, the beneficiary met both male petitioners through an Internet dating site. She maintained correspondence with both at the same time and even met both of them in Istanbul, Turkey, albeit at different times. The I-129F fiance petitions were filed within two weeks of one another, although neither petition knew about the other. The email correspondence and description of the "meeting" for both petitioners reads like a script. After a long fraud interview, the applicant admitted that she was engaged to both American men. The petitions were sent for revocation, but interestingly enough, even though the petitioners were advised of the situation, one still professed his intention to marry the beneficiary. In an odd turn of events, the beneficiary stated that she would not marry this petitioner after all.

D. DV FRAUD: Post processes immigrant visas for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Post works closely with neighboring consular sections to verify the validity of documentation. Approximately 80% of post's DV cases are from Uzbekistan. Beginning in Summer 2006, Embassy Tashkent will process Uzbek DV applications.

Post has encountered a number of suspicious Affidavits of Support and notariats provided by ethnic Russian Americans located in Chicago, Illinois and Brooklyn, New York. It appears that a translation Agency OMEGA LLC, located in Samarkand, Uzbekistan at Ziyokor St. Apt. 31, Samarkand, Uzbekistan 703033; along with its translators Nina Vyacheslavovna Pogosyan and M. Abduhamedova assist in the completion of Diversity Visa package paperwork and the search for potential "financial sponsors" for Uzbekistani nationals. They advise DV winners what documents they should acquire to improve their chances of getting a visa, usually a new passport, a military service book, or a new birth certificate. For these services, they charge 400,000 UZB SUMs, about \$400 (8 month's salary.)

Many applicants serviced by Agency OMEGA have provided Affidavits of Support notarized by Leonard Schwartz of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Schwartz himself has been a sponsor for a number of DV cases processed in Almaty over the past year. The Americans sponsoring these DV winners were based in Chicago, but the applicants provided a Brooklyn address for their permanent address. It remains unclear what the connection is or the relationship to fraud, but it certainly raises questions as to the validity of the information.

E. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: ACS fraud is extremely low in Kazakhstan. To date, post has not had major problems with mala fide applicants trying to obtain genuine U.S. passports or Consular Reports of Birth Abroad from the consular section.

F. ADOPTION FRAUD: Post processes over 500 adoptions a year, the fifth largest provider of adopted children for Americans adopting abroad. To date, post has not registered problems with fraudulent documentation or fraudulent cases.

G. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFIT FRAUD: Post assists DHS Moscow, the Department and the BCIS District offices in the United States with verifying documents for refugee and asylum cases. In most instances, these documents turn out to be fraudulent.

H. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: Cooperation with the Kazakhstani government authorities is mixed. MFA is in the capital of Astana and normally requires a diplomatic note before responding to official requests.

However, post has good relations with the MFA representative in Almaty. There is a noted lack of cooperation or organization among Kazakhstan's ministries and regional departments. Despite this, post is usually able to receive immediate assistance with verification of documents and border crossings, most notably during the so-called "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan last spring.

Post has developed strong relationships with adoption processing authorities. We also have good ties with the Ministry of Education--the government agency that oversees the processing of dossiers.

I. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: Kazakhstan's geographic location makes it a transit point for alien and drug smuggling, particularly from South Asia to Western Europe.

In Summer 2006 Uzbek IV/DV processing will be transferred to Embassy Tashkent.

In Summer/Autumn 2006 Tajik NIV processing is scheduled to be transferred to Embassy Dushanbe.

In September 2006, the Embassy will move from Almaty to Astana. Almaty will maintain a consular section with two American officers and eight FSNs. All IV processing, including regional processing except for Uzbeks will remain in Almaty. Embassy Astana will open a consular section in September 2006 with one officer, a Consular Associate and at least two FSNs. Astana will process only NIVs and share the ACS workload with Almaty. The Chief of the two Consular Sections will remain in Almaty.

J. STAFFING AND TRAINING: Almaty Consular Section Chief Jeff Lodinsky and Vice Consul Anne Baker share the workload of Fraud Prevention Manager. Post has one full-time DV Fraud Investigator, Ilya Pyuro. NIV fraud prevention is the responsibility of FSN Zhanna Lim.

Jeff Lodinsky attended the Small Post Consular Leadership Development Course (PC-108) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 2006.

Anne Baker attended the Fraud Prevention for Consular Manager's course (PC-541) at FSI in May 2005, the Small Post Consular Leadership Development Course (PC-108) in Mainz, Germany in November 2005, and the EurAsia Regional Fraud Prevention Conference in Istanbul in April 2006.

Ilya Pyuro attended the Fraud Prevention Workshop for FSNs (PC-542) at FSI in November 2005. Mr. Pyuro also spent three days at Embassy Tashkent at their Fraud Prevention Unit in April 2005.

Zhanna Lim attended the NIV FSN Workshop (PC-121) at FSI in January 2004 and the EurAsia Regional Fraud Prevention Conference in Istanbul in April 2006.

ORDWAY